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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 002987

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/26/2011

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OPRC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NSA MOHAMMED ON BIAFRA HOUSE

REF: ABUJA 2982

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 6.

2. (C) SUMMARY: During a November 11 meeting with Ambassador Jeter, NSA Aliyu Mohammed urged the United States to stop a U.S.-based organization from calling itself the "Embassy of Biafra," and from broadcasting the "Voice of Biafra" to Nigeria. After referring to the freedom of speech protection granted by the U.S. Constitution, Ambassador Jeter explained that we would look into the matter quickly. Action requested in para 6. Draft press release in para 7. END SUMMARY.

3. (C) The NSA stated flatly that the Biafra House, "Embassy of Biafra" situation, concerned the GON a great deal. They now had a radio station, "The Voice of Biafra," broadcasting from Washington to Nigeria. After losing over one million people in its civil war, and then putting the conflict behind it, Nigeria did not want to relive this piece of its history. The NSA enjoined the Ambassador to "do something" to stop the group from calling itself an Embassy and broadcasting to Nigeria.

4. (C) Ambassador Jeter, noting that President Obasanjo had discussed this matter with Secretary Powell during his November 2 visit to Washington, explained that the protection of freedom of speech in the United States gave groups wide latitude as to what they might call themselves. However, the Biafra House was not an accredited Embassy to the United States, nor were they being treated as one. Jeter informed the NSA that we would look into the matter urgently to see what, if anything, could be done. On November 26, visiting Nigerian Ambassador to Washington, Jibril Aminu, called Ambassador Jeter to relay President Obasanjo's continuing concern over this issue. Obasanjo, Aminu related, felt very strongly about this matter because he had led Nigerian forces during the civil war and wanted the matter of Biafra closed, now and forever.

5. (C) COMMENT: The misrepresentation that there is an "Embassy of Biafra" in the United States deeply concerns the GON leadership. The GON sees the "Embassy of Biafra" as an attempt to foment separatism, and to undermine the Obasanjo Administration. Given the tragedy of the Nigerian Civil War, any representation of Biafra as a diplomatic entity provokes strong emotional reaction from the GON senior leadership, some of whom, like President Obasanjo and NSA Mohammed, were military officers at the time of the war. They understandably want to nip this in the bud before it spurs more separatist agitation from this or any other group. (While separation is not a strong political force, such public agitation could unduly rile ethnic tensions at a time when everything should be done to calm the waters.) END COMMENT.

6. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Because it is an important issue for Nigeria (it was the only point raised by the NSA in the meeting and the first issue raised by President Obasanjo in his meeting with Secretary Powell), we believe the USG should make a clear statement regarding Biafra House. The Embassy requests that the Department approve the issuance of the press release in Para 7. We also ask the Department to find out whether Biafra House is broadcasting in accordance with applicable U.S. law and regulations. The broadcasts are being transmitted on short-wave at 12.125 MHz. The address of Biafra House is Suite 700, No 733, 15th Street NW. The phone number is 202-347-2983. END ACTION REQUEST.

7. (SBU) BEGIN PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE: It has come to the attention of the Embassy and the Government of the United States that an organization has been publicly representing

itself in the United States as the "Embassy of Biafra."
Neither the Embassy nor the Government of the United States
recognizes the existence of any organization by that name.
This group does not have diplomatic status in the United
States, nor does the United States recognize any such group
as representing any known government. Whatever confusion
resulting from the group incorrectly referring to itself as
an Embassy is unacceptable. We disapprove of such false
misrepresentation and urge the organization to take the steps
necessary to end the confusion that it has caused. We also
take this opportunity to reaffirm our friendship toward the
Nigerian people, our full recognition of the Obasanjo
Administration, and our respect for the territorial integrity
and indivisible sovereignty of the Federal Republic of
Nigeria. END PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE.
Jeter